

SOCIOLOGY IN TROUBLESOME TIMES

Review paper

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Abstract:

It can be freely said that there are only a few disciplines that have escaped so long the conceptual definition and the subject framework that would be generally accepted. The multiplicity of contents of sociology has led to a state in which almost every textbook or book, of different character distinctiveness, has a diverse determining framework of its subject. In all these periods and sociology definition quests, a tedious seeking process of sociology for its own scientific identity has evolved. Nowadays, many analyses of state and perspective of sociology show visible signs of distrust, insecurity, as well as underachievement. This situation is due to the fact that many, outside this discipline, do not understand sociology seriously and do not attribute a merited significance to it. This problem becomes even more dramatic when one takes into account the fact that these doubts have snuck into the order of sociologists themselves. Ever growing disbelief in itself harms sociology much more than the disbelief of those who are not in this profession.

Keywords: sociology, functionalism, sociological imagination

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1. Sociology from idea to science

Sociology, as a general theoretical and fundamental science about the overall understanding of society, is very difficult to determine. Comte believed that it was time for the last science to appear in the series, and for him also the greatest one: sociology.² In his explanation of how sociology can become a science, Comte emphasised that discipline should look for general laws that can explain the functioning of the social universe based on the model of the physics of his age. Thus, Comte saw sociology, as Turner points out, as a “hard science” like any other science. As a hard science, sociology could have an engineering application, which, in essence, means that sociological laws could be used to rebuild a society. Conscious of the dramatic nature of the social changes of the IX century, Comte is not advocating the turning of the wheel of history backwards, but is celebrating the emergence of a new social order based not on theological convictions, but on the heritage of positivism. Devoted to the establishment of social sciences, he makes efforts to raise politics to the rank of science. Recognizing the deep crisis of the Western Society, Comte takes over the role of the scientific reformer, publishing the *Plan for the Scientific Work necessary to Reorganise Society, 1822*.

If we accept the fact that Comte’s greatest contribution to sociology was his advocacy of a new science of society, then we can attribute to Durkheim the merit of having formalised, almost half a century later (1888), sociology’s university attire. “Our society must regain consciousness of its

2 He expounded his idea of scientific sociology and gave a rational explanation of sociology in an unfriendly intellectual environment and time. “Europe in the early thirties of the 19th century greeted him. Twenty years later, they mocked him and called him crazy. What else can be said about a man who has been proclaimed a “great priest of humanity” to a crowd of workers and third-rate intellectuals? He signed his work, starting back in 1844, with the words: ‘The Founder of Universal Religion, the Great Priest of Humanity’. The last of his writings, who made him famous in 1830, did not deserve a single review in the French press in 1842. He paid the price, because he was arrogant, rough and unpleasant. He remained in the defensive position until the end, even declaring he would be subjected to “mental hygiene,” and would not read the works of people he considered to be intellectually inferior. He was the founder of sociology-AugusteCompte” (Turner, 2009:31).

organic unity... well, sirs, I believe that sociology, more than any other science, is well placed to restore these ideas.” (E. Durkheim, 1888)³If a science, regardless of the field of reality, is included in the system of university disciplines as the highest, most proficient and most influential form of organisation of cognitive activities, it enters into the mature era of its development. By acquiring a university status, completely new opportunities are unveiled to it, previously abridged or rather inaccessible. University status has provided sociology with the possibility of an organised and methodical transfer and dissemination of knowledge in its field, the training of academics, equipped with academic knowledge, a more systematic scientific-research activity, an integration into interdisciplinary division of labour, the establishment of objective relations with related disciplines, as well as a more stringent selection of theoretical knowledge, empirical generalisation and methodological tools it will incorporate into its system.

It can be freely said that there are only a few disciplines that have escaped so long the conceptual definition and the subject framework that would be generally accepted. The multiplicity of contents of sociology has led to a state in which almost every textbook or book, of different character distinctiveness, has a diverse determining framework of its subject. In all these periods and sociology definition quests, a tedious seeking process of sociology for its own scientific identity has evolved. In addition to multiservice, a multitude of individual (particular or special) identities were burdened initially with the philosophical knowledge, with the knowledge of other scientific disciplines, and then with extra scientific knowledge. It

3 One seemingly insignificant event in the academic life of France at the end of the IX century, even beyond the border of the country where it occurred, actually had far-reaching consequences for the development of sociology as a science and profession. By a ministerial decree of 20 July 1887, Emile Durheim, a high school professor of philosophy in Troyes, twenty-nine years old, was a lecturer, i.e. a docent without a doctorate, appointed as a lecturer of a subject constituted for him called “pedagogy and social science” at the Faculty of Philosophy in Bordeaux. Underneath this eclectic course title was concealed, the institutionalization of a new science, **sociology**, as an academic discipline. This date and event in the history of sociology development is marked as an event that marked the beginning of the new history of sociology development, since one of the previously most marginal intellectual activities was integrated into the academic establishment and thus gained the legitimacy of a “strict science”.

generated a multitude of identities and sociology tried in each one of them to liberate someone of the aforementioned knowledge, with the development of a determining scientific characteristic of recognisability of their own scientific areas based on sociological conditionality of limiting their own study framework. "The sociological imagination allows us to understand the life of an individual, as well as their mutual relationships in the conditions of a given society. This is the undeniable task of sociological imagination and its perspective. "(Mills, 1998:8). Through different periods of development, followed by efforts to release from the influence or presence of other knowledge, sociology has constantly enriched its theoretical and methodological framework of existence with its own specifics and recognisability. During the pursuit for its own scientific identity, sociology was transformed and moved from unsystematised and fragmentary thoughts, about the society in general as well as about its fractional parts, towards systematised and complete truths about social institutions and developments in a society development.

Therefore, Gurvich rightly points out that social reality is not only studied by sociology, but also by special social sciences, born before and partially autonomous, which is why the specificity of sociology cannot be determined unless at the same time its area and method are determined, and thus a subject of interest that arises through the mutual permeation of its field and methods. The field of sociology is a social reality, which cannot be reduced to any other reality. "It is manifested primarily in the 'total social phenomena' or the totalities in the movement of these focuses of volcanic effervescence, affected by the shifting of tides, those reservoirs of eruptions of collective acts and efforts, the phenomenon where movement means a continuous struggle against external and internal obstacles and through the acting of *We*, groups and societies create and transform themselves. The total social phenomena generate manifold human meanings that permeate them or they are engrafted onto them. "(Gurvich, 1966: 28-29).

One of the founders of sociology and the creator of its name, Auguste-Compte, emphasized that sociology as a science, the youngest by origin, is also the most complex of all sciences. This refers not only to the position in relation to the natural, but also to its place among the humanities. Still the subject of controversy in sociological discourse nowadays is the question

of whether or not sociology has reached its maturity and whether it has achieved the unity of theoretical and empirical research that everyone is aspiring to. This controversy is encouraged by the existence of a large number of definitions that define sociology as a science, which can be characterised for the most part as the most inadequate and deficient, that is, that they do not define the entirety of sociological thought. “None of the great founders of sociology, including Saint Simon, Proudhomme, Comte, or Marx, or Spencer, have a definition of sociology that would be adequate to their real ideas. We can identify, among the founders of sociology, some indications of the subject of sociology, or more precisely, the specificities of the area of reality in which it creates its subject.” (Gurvich, 1966: 16).

Based on the analysis of a large number of definitions of classics of sociology and sociological thought, Gurvich offers its definition of sociology as a science: “Sociology is qualitative and discontinuous, based on dialectics, a typology of astructural, structurable and structured total social phenomena, which it studies at once in all deep layers, on all ladders and in all sectors, with the aspiration to follow their trends of structuring, de-structuring, restructuring and decomposing structures and explaining them in co-operation with history.

If we wanted to shortly formulate it, we could say that sociology is a science that studies the total social phenomena in the entirety of their facets and their movements, classifying them into dialectically-expressed microsocial, grouping and global types that are continually evolving and disappearing” (Gurvich, 1966: 36).

Dealing with the determination of sociology as a science and its subject were also the sociologists in the area of the former Yugoslavia, of which two are interesting to mention.

“Sociology is a science that deals with the study of general, common features of social phenomena and relations between these phenomena. In other words, it examines the essence of various kinds, classes, types of social phenomena, and these include the various forms in which people live, the various processes and relationships they enter into, as well as the achievements that emerge from such processes and relationships. In this context, special emphasis is placed on the interaction of various social phenomena,

on the concrete study of the relationship between economic, political, psychological and conceptual phenomena.

Sociology is, moreover, a science that deals with the study of the legality of structure, development and functioning of certain socio-economic formations, as well as the transition from one formation into another. Only when studying the life and work of people and social groups or social forms, relationships, processes and achievements in the totality of a certain epoch of society, i.e. the given system, one can notice the mutual connection and interaction of social phenomena in their structural and dynamic form.

Finally, based on the study of what is common in the study of social phenomena, what is typical of a certain type of social phenomenon, as well as on the basis of the study of the legality of structure, functioning and development of individual socio-economic formations throughout history, sociology should perceive the whole structure and the development of human society, i.e. to study the laws of society development in general.” (Fiamengo, 1975: 95).

Danilo Ž. Marković thinks that “The General Sociology is the most complete theoretical science of human society as a unique reality determining the specificity of social phenomena and their relationships in structure and social reality, revealing the sociological laws about the structure and development of social phenomena, narrow structural and global societies.” (Marković, 1999: 50).

From the very beginning, sociology has undoubtedly established itself as a special discipline, establishing its subject, as well as the method of studying it. “Originally, sociology was not just a new approach to societal study, but it was the overall discovery of the phenomena of “society” as such.” (Berger-Kellner, 1991: 31). Merton’s latent and manifest function suggests the need for a distinction between concepts confirming that the manifest projection of social reality is not complete and does not represent the whole of the story, implying the need for study and the latent, invisible dimension. This basically means that the world is not what it seems to be. That is why Đ. Šušnjić is right when he says: “Our world consists of what is seen and what is not seen: only visible and invisible make reality. Only a fraction of what is real is visible” (Šušnjić, 1999: 18). For Wright

Mills, regardless of what is true when it comes to disciplines such as political science and economics, history and anthropology, “It is obvious that in the USA today, sociology, or at least what is known under that name, has become the centre of thinking about social science. Sociology has also become the centre of interest for scientific methods, and in sociology, the most extravagant interest in ‘general theory’ is being encountered. Indeed, the abundance of intellectual work is invested in the development of sociological traditions.” (Mills 1998: 26).

When he thinks about the role of a businessman, Mills says that he needs to be an interpreter and that the distinction between describing and interpreting social relations should be distinguished because he believed that sociology is primarily an empirical science and that the field of its research is necessarily limited to given historical societies. He considered that a sociologist should not only keep on describing the present state of the phenomenon, but that he must go back to history in order to see the phenomenon in development. Following the classical European sociological tradition, primarily Weber, Mills struggled to rise above the viewpoint of statistics, to cover the issues wider and deeper, to learn about them more directly, gaining one’s own experience, to think and infer from them independently of the statistics and its correlations.

Perhaps it is reasonable to assume that sociology will advance, as R. Merton points out, as long as its main, but not exclusive, interest is a medium level theory, and it will fall back if its attention is primarily directed toward the development of total sociological systems. “The theoretician of sociology, who devoted exclusively to the study of the total system with its great abstractions, risks that, like modern furniture, the interior of his mind is naked and uncomfortable” (Merton, 1979: 56).

Many analyses of the state and perspectives of sociology today show visible signs of distrust, insecurity, and underachievement. This situation is due to the fact that many outside the discipline do not understand sociology seriously and do not attribute to it a deserved importance, and this problem becomes even more dramatic when one takes into account the fact that these doubts have also come to the ranks of sociologists themselves. An increasing doubt in itself harms sociology much more than doubts of those who do not belong to the profession.

2. Social context of the origin and development of sociology

The speed of social changes that brought about the capitalism and industrial revolution in modern Europe has also influenced the dramatic position of sociology, depending on social circumstances. The emergence of dictatorial regimes of different ideological colours faced sociology with great challenges, and it was often forced to play the role of a proponent (apologete). The twentieth century has undoubtedly caused a serious blow to the idea of enlightenment and its optimism, as well as the notion of rational “creativity of the world”. The whole twentieth century is marked by the crisis of modernity and modern secular rationality. This situation is, of course, also related to the difficulties that have arisen in the framework of sociology. The dramatic character of the twentieth century has given rise to several different opinions that led to the re-affirmation of an optimistic faith in the age of enlightenment, whether through the idea of Marxist progressivism or through the centrist-liberal ideology of Robert Nisbet’s progress.

At the beginning of the 19th century, when the idea of the science of society was born, sociology was created in response to the demise of the old social order caused by the political and industrial revolution. According to Nisbet, such a response was conservative. Nisbet himself talks about the “paradox of sociology” and the “creative paradox” which “lies in the fact that, although according to its objectives, its political and scientific values of its key characteristics, it belongs to the main stream of modernism, while its essential concepts and implicit perspectives lay, generally speaking, much closer to philosophical conservatism. Community, authority, tradition, sacred: these are the main conservative themes of this period, which are alive and present at the intellectual line. Equally imposed were also the presentiments of alienation, as well as the totalitarian power rising from mass democracy, along with the cultural decay. We will look in vain for the more significant influence of these ideas and admiration for the serious work of economists, politologists, psychologists, and ethnologists of that time. And in sociology, they are transformed by the rationalist or scientific goals of sociologists, at the very core of the discipline” (Nisbet, 2007: 37-38). Obviously, it is about the ideas that connect with the pre-modern

societies, which is further emphasized by Nisbet, linking them with opposing concepts, which undoubtedly belong to the period of modernity. These are the ideas of society, power, class, secularism and progress. Nisbet thinks the first five ideas are primary, and the remaining five are just derived from them. Nisbet's bonding of early sociology with the purely conservative reactions to enlightenment, the French revolution, civilisation and industrialisation is at the very least debatable, but it cannot be explicitly denied.

The sociological-knowledge analysis of the broad social conditions in which sociology has emerged undoubtedly confirms that, at least in France, it acquired university status precisely thanks to the fact that, in its Durkheim version, it most directly suited the extra-scientific goals of the then Republican order. If, as Durkheim himself claimed, sociology was and remains a highly French doctrine, it is necessary to find an explanation as to how sociology gained its academic status in the very France and, secondly, that there was willingness to use it for ideological purposes.

The industrial revolution has left an indelible mark and confirmation of a decisive influence on the thought of the nineteenth century. In all spheres of spiritual creativity, the industrial revolution has demonstrated its strength and legitimacy as typically English, as the political revolution of 1789 was typically French, however, the implications of the industrial revolution will not pass neither France nor Germany. The position of labour force, the transformation of ownership, the industrial city, technology and the factory system, notes R. Nisbet, have become the most important aspects of the industrial revolution that will determine the emergence of sociological issues and reflection. These concepts of sociology, created under such conditions, will have a decisive influence on the leading thinkers of sociology of the time, such as Karl Marx and Max Weber. The position of the working class becomes the dominant theme of many sociological discussions, both from the moral and analytical point of view. The new system has almost completely abolished the class of small farmers, notes R. Nisbet and adds how it could be noticed that from one end to another of England, the houses inhabited by small farmers and their happy families are now permanently collapsing. Everywhere we could see how the traditional relationship that provides security is being destroyed, how craftsmen and peasants become "the hands", subordinated to the lords of the fabric,

the rulers of the weaving machine, to the big masters of yarn. The feeling has prevailed among people that while they lived based on the relationship between a Master and a Human, everyone had their place and everyone was free. A state of masters and slaves was created.

This concept of modernity is marked as a set of ideas and practices derived from the intellectual-philosophical, socio-economic and political circumstances of the late 18th and early 19th century. It is precisely the birth of something new (social and human) that Hegel expressed in the Preface of “Phenomenology of the Spirit” using these words: “Anyway, it is not difficult to see that our age is the time of birth and transition to a new period. The Spirit has cut off the present world of survival and representation and is just preparing to drown it in the past, and begin work on its transformation.” (Hegel, 2000: 9) This transformation takes place at several levels and they determine the essential characteristics of modernity: at the economic level, high seasonal growth in production and consumption; in the political field, participation of public opinion, i.e. democratic representation of peoples in determining and choosing political alternatives; at the cultural level, the diffusion of secular and rationalist norms and values; in social reality, an unrestricted freedom of movement or personal liberty with regard to geographical, social and political mobility; on the level of individuality: the increase of individual productive abilities, personal independence, the tendency for mutual cooperation, etc. Summing up the list of levels of modernity, it can be concluded that it is manifested as a process of secularisation, democratisation, rationalisation, industrialisation, urbanisation and individualisation. Wherein, it is important to emphasise that this process is emphatically understood as progress, precisely in the sense of linear progress inherited from the philosophy of the Enlightenment. The very concept of ideology, with elements of criticism, aim and action, is basically modern. But modern ideologies have assumed that only human beings cannot achieve a goal-oriented and constructive social change, but that it can be achieved through rational methods of political organisation, the use of the state as a mechanism for improving the quality of human life, as well as the endeavour to win the power of the state through political organisations such as parties. Social programs of social change would be shaped in that way.

3. Contradictions in sociology and its managing with social changes

The modern era is characterised by a rapid acceleration of social changes, as Berger notes, pointing out that institutions, groups, and even individuals are moving much faster from infantilism to senility, with very short interim periods. Sociology copes with a similar situation. In the middle of the twentieth century, the self-consciousness of sociologists came down to the affiliation to the prospective profession, while “today, contrary to the presented assessment, sociologists spend too much time convincing each other of the current state of the profession, like colleagues from a nursing home, finding a reason to congratulate each other for the mere fact that they are still there. “Sociologists are always in conflict with their own discipline if they want to play the role of proponents of something or, more precisely, if they want to work as sociologists. This is true, regardless of whether they advocate “conservative” or “revolutionary” goals. The sociological genius is negative and paradoxical, just as a denial of sociology is capable of delivering its greatest contribution to any positive goal. This “subversive” feature of sociology was felt, almost instinctively, by dictatorial regimes of all ideological colours and therefore sociology is either exposed to repression, or becomes its own caricature in the countries in which such regimes govern. “(Berger-Kellner, 1991: 33).

In Socialist Yugoslavia, sociology has born the burden of ideology, primarily using a Marxist prefix in its name, and one of the leading sociologists of that time, Ante Fiamengo emphasises, among other things: “An increase in interest in sociology in socialist countries is dictated by special circumstances. Socialism is a system that is built with more elements of consciousness and with less haphazardness in respect of the construction of the capitalist system. This fact requires the maximum knowledge of the legality of social movement “(Fiamengo, 1975: 7). The key problems of socialism, the basic legitimacy of its development and the tendency of further movement, Fiamengo argues, can best be seen in the structural and dynamic recording of all aspects of social life. “It is only under such assumptions that a scientifically more precise picture of the functioning of socialism can be gained, and thus a much safer orientation and compass in the adoption of various economic, political and cultural-educational measures, in order

to accelerate the construction of socialism. Under such an assumption, various practical and conscious concrete actions in various spheres of social life will be more appropriate to the basic tendencies of the movement of socialism.” (ibid., P. 7). In this regard, Fiamengo considers a stronger intervention in the direction of empirical sociological research of building socialism, should be one of the basic tasks of sociology as a science. Though an ideologically oriented sociologist, Fiamengo, however, implicitly argued with himself, between value neutrality and apology, asking the question: “Such sociolinguistic orientation will not take sociology to sociography, and thus degrading itself from a general science of society into a bare empirical discipline rich in descriptive material but, largely deprived of scientific explanations of the key problems of the movement of socialism.” In such circumstances it is often the case that scientists- sociologists are turning to apologetics. Nonetheless, he immediately tries to eliminate this fear, at least for a while, arguing that this will not happen because, in contrast to the civilian, Marxist direction in sociology, in historical materialism, has a scientifically funded general theory and method that minimizes the danger for “sociology to lose itself in the sea of empirical material and slip into the descriptive discipline, sociography.” In self-arguing and self-defence, Fiamengo still considers the possibility of greater or less turning towards sociography, but he seeks a way out again to come through the conclusion that although turning to sociography may happen, there is a possibility that such tendencies can be more easily overcome with respect to civil sociology. Whether we agreed with Fiamengo or not, one cannot deny the fact that socialism, like other totalitarian systems, has produced a large number of apologists among scientists.

Regardless of whether the object of interest, says W.Mills, is a powerful state, a great force, or a small literary circle, a family, a prison life or a religion, questions such as those listed above are issues raised by analysts of society. These questions represent the intellectual pole of a classical study of man as a social being - these are questions that are inevitably posed by anyone with a sociological fantasy or imagination.

4. Social changes and their reflection on humans

“We have come to the knowledge that every individual lives, from one generation to another, in a particular society; that he is experiencing his life in a certain historical sequence. Already with the very fact of his living, he contributes, no matter how insignificant such a contribution may be, to the organisation of that society and the course of its history, although he himself, in his turn, is the product of society and of those historical gravity and anti-gravity forces that are manifested within the same society.” (Mills, 1998: 8). Guided by the sociological imagination, Wright Mills finds that there is a desire in it to understand the socio-historical meaning and position of an individual. This contextual plane on which Wright’s thought exists is related both to the social context and to the historical period in which an individual realises his existence. That is why it is essential to make a distinction between “personal, private difficulties, conditioned by the life environment” and “public, social problems arising from the social structure”.

Connecting the science of society in the process of its constitution during the 19th century with the ideologies of modern times is the fact that the science of society from the very beginning, i.e. from the idea of “social physiology” of Saint Simon, to Durkheim and Weber, who already speak about sociology as an academic scientific discipline, was also a reaction to social, political, economic, cultural and other changes resulting from the political and industrial revolution. Ultimately, the specificity of sociology as a science of society and a human as a “social being” is that a sociologist is a member of that society and participates in social values. Though he strives for scientific objectivity and value neutrality, his work, however, is reflected by the “spirit of time,” as well as by an ideology, moreover because they themselves are a reaction to key events that determine a certain period. However, clearly differing sociology from ideology is an unambiguously highlighted position, that the society and the changes that are happening to it, speak in a rational and scientific-objective way. Therefore, this is clearly an aspiration, especially prominent in French sociology, to establish a new science as a positive doctrine, which will occupy the leading position in the Compté’s hierarchy of science. Fiamengo also had his opinion about

the ideology: “Ideological conflicts and fronts in the past, and ideological conflicts and wars in the present, are inevitable manifestations of social contradictions in the economic structure of society. They were a terrible conceptual force in the past, they are also a powerful driving force at the modern stage of human development, as they will remain in their specific form a very significant driving force in the process of building a socialist society.”(Fiamengo, 1975: 416).

The state of anomie that is manifested through the breakdown of traditional solidarity, the imposition of new roles and institutional forms, the impossibility of applying old values and beliefs, according to Berger and Kellner, pushes the individual into a state of non-rootedness and disorientation so that he no longer feels at home in his world. It seems that since Durkheim has not changed, because he notes: “The state of anomie has to be attributed, as we will demonstrate, to conflicts that are constantly being renewed. For, since there is no restraint for the strengths, which stand with one another without the set boundaries that they are to respect, they tend to develop to the end, and collide between themselves to mutually suppress and subdue one another. Certainly, they manage better to crush the weak or to subdue them. Forced armistice are always temporary and do not put the ghosts at ease. Human passions stop only in the face of some moral force instilling respect. If there is no authority of this kind, then the rule of the stronger governs, and, covertly or openly, the state of war necessarily becomes chronic.” (Durkheim, 1972: 52-53). This kind of situation is considered by Durkheim as a sickening phenomenon, because it is against the very goal of any society that consists in eradicating or alleviating this war among people by subverting the physical law of a stronger to a higher law. The hopelessness and underachievement of BiH citizens today can be characterized as an anomalous state, because the transition initiated without a perceivable ending date, the lenient ideals of welfare and the boon of democracy after the collapse of socialism, have rooted the culture of poverty⁴ as a dominant culture.

4 In 2016, BiH was under the absolute poverty line of 28% of the population, in FBiH 28% and in the RS 30%. This means that in Bosnia and Herzegovina, around 900,000 people live below the absolute poverty line. Indirectly, this is confirmed by the estimates of international organizations in 2016. According to the EU assessment, BiH is one of

Poverty⁵ directly threatens human dignity because people are deprived of basic rights such as the right to work, to a dignified life or education. Until recently, the term “poverty” was applied in the sense of lack of revenue for the purchase of a minimum basket of goods and services. Today, poverty is considered to be a state of affairs when the basic opportunities for a dignified life are lacking. It is recognized that poverty manifests itself in a variety of ways, including the lack of income and resources necessary to ensure sustainable existence:

- hunger and malnutrition, poor health;
- limited or no access to education and other basic services;
- increased mortality, including death from a disease;

the five poorest countries in Europe. UN research shows that every sixth inhabitant of BiH lives of KM 3-5 per day (KM 90-150 per month), i.e. 17% of the population is in extreme poverty far below the absolute poverty line, and 700.00 inhabitants are on the brink of poverty. The other side of the same medal is characterized by the growth of social inequalities (5 billion euros of savings are held by 1% of the population, 90 multi-billionaires live in BiH). Source: (Papić, 2017:6)

5 Poverty is a broad term, generally viewed as a multidimensional phenomenon and cannot be reduced to monetary issues alone. The concept of poverty, which is considered in this analysis, implies a lack of minimal levels of material well-being in relation to the given level of consumption expenditures, which is called the *poverty threshold*. The threshold of poverty is expressed through the value of expenditures below which the household would be considered poor in the society in which it lives. According to the UN definition, the poor are considered persons who are deprived of their lifestyle, comfort and dignity, which are considered normal in the society in which they live. Poverty, in addition to insufficient income to meet the needs of life, implies the inability of employment, unsuitable housing conditions and inadequate access to social protection, health, education and communal services. In the broader sense, poverty can imply the inability to exercise the right to a healthy environment and natural wealth, primarily on clean water and air. Poverty is constantly measured by the changing norms of a particular society and its immediate environment and according to these criteria, poverty is divided into poverty or absolute poverty, relative poverty, pauperism and new poverty.

There are many causes of poverty. In addition to economic underdevelopment, there are often cases such as illnesses, epidemics, natural disasters, environmental pollution, political and financial shocks within national economies and globally, as well as war destructions, etc.

- homelessness and inadequate housing conditions;
- uncertain surroundings, social discrimination and isolation.

The exclusion from decision-making and the civil, social and cultural life of the community are also essential characteristics of the denial of human rights. Multidimensionality of poverty as a phenomenon makes it possible to think about it as a state characterised by a permanent or chronic deprivation of resources, capabilities, possibilities of choice, security and power needed for the necessary standard of living and the realisation of other civil, economic, political, cultural and social rights.

A perennial war and political conflicts are the main causes of enduring poverty, social exclusion from social trends and inequality in BiH.

Conclusion:

At the end of this discussion, it may be simplest to use Merton's thinking that the path towards effective general schemes in sociology will become obstructed if, as before in sociology, every charismatic sociologist tries to develop one's own general theoretical system. "The persistence of this practice can only contribute to the Balkanization of Sociology, where every principality is managed by its theoretical system. We, sociologists, have to strive for a progressively comprehensive sociological theory that, instead of developing from the head of one man, gradually consolidates middle-volume theories, which then become special cases of general formulations" (Merton 1979: 56-57).

On the other hand, R. Nisbet warns: "Today, in an increasing number of academic institutions, sociology is literally in danger of extinction. Economics, political science, anthropology or any other social science close to sociology is not in difficulty, it is not jeopardised. At present in general, it seems that social sciences are in a better situation than sociology, even in the years of its flourishing. Only sociology, as we are painfully aware, is chosen for rejection." (Nisbet, 2007: 15). Sociology, among other things, is a particular way of looking at the human world. Therefore, the issue of what is a man and his understanding, which Weber called "Verstehen", with which the entire sociological undertaking must survive or fall, should be placed back in the focus of sociology's interest. "Sociology has to go back to

'big issues.' The greatest among these issues, today as well as in the classical period, are the ones already mentioned about the organisation of the modern⁶ world. Fortunately or unfortunately, they did not get answers once and for all. "(Berger-Kellner, 1991: 36).

Not giving up the value of statistics, W. Mills points out that a sociologist has to keep in the second plan the minor and elaborate statistical refinement, killing the content and not giving the right knowledge. In the first place, a sociologist should focus on the comprehension of the whole phenomenon, where the image, in some ways, will be more complete than the material it encompassed, where the sociologist will give something to the facts, by explaining them and not just by simply copying them. In support of Mills' view of statistics, it should be noted that "the goal of statistical observation and analysis is to establish the degree of frequency of some characteristic in the appropriate mass of cases. Statistics give us an answer to the question of how, i.e. how often a characteristic appears in the appropriate mass, but not why it occurs. "(Popović, 1967: 73). Therefore, Mills' position on the secondary role of statistics cannot be accepted a priori, because statistics complement the understanding of certain phenomena in society and represent a significant tool of every sociologist dealing with the dynamics of social phenomena.

What can be said at the end of this text? Perhaps the best answer was given by Durkheim 130 years ago, when he addressed the attendants of the

6 Modernity is not a dark secret. It is a set of technological, economic, social and learning factors and all of them are experientially accessible to historians and social scientists. Modernity is confirmed as a source of benefit and enrichment of man's life. The material well-being of modernity is reflected in the growth of living standards, eradication of hunger and disease, reduced mortality and extended life expectancy of man. Along with material well-being, there is an evident and intangible benefit that is reflected through the empowerment of the idea of personal freedom that has been drawn into the center of action of the Enlightenment. In addition, modernity has also come up with its price, which has been shown as an uneven spread by the material side, especially at the initial stage. "In other cases, the price is immaterial, but this is no less painful-the breakdown of traditional solidarity, the imposition of new roles and institutional forms, the inability to apply old values and beliefs. In its worst form, this price pushes an individual into an anomalous state, that is, into a state of inexpression, disorientation, so that he no longer feels at home in his world."(Berger-Kellner, 1991:152-153)

first day of university and academic life of sociology: “... Here, gentlemen, lay the theoretical services our science can provide is. But, in addition, it can have a beneficial effect on practical life. We live in a country that does not know another master, but public opinion. In order for that master not to become an unreasonable despot, it was necessary to enlighten him, and in what other way could it be done but through science? The spirit of collectivism has been weakened here. Each one of us has an exaggerated feeling about one’sself, not seeing the boundaries that bind from every side. By building an illusion of one’s own power, we try to be self-sufficient. We need to react with all the power to this dispersive tendency. It is necessary that our society re-conquers that awareness of organic unity, that an individual feels the social mass that encompasses and pervades it, that feeling always governs his behaviour; because it is not enough to inspire it only from time to time, in particularly critical circumstances. Well, gentlemen, I believe that sociology, more than any other science, is able to establish these ideas. It is actually the one that will explain to an individual what a society is, how it completes it and how little significance it has when reduced to its own powers.” Mannheim similarly contemplates saying that a human is not free to shape his desires and ambitions in his life in a purely personal, individual way. The objective position of a human in a society determines what his ambitions may be. There are better messages for our today’s disintegrated and disoriented society. Durkheim’s message is both current and necessary today, no less than 130 years ago when he voiced it in a visionary and timely manner.

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